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Conference Abstract

The Conservation of a Victorian Taxidermy Display Case

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Abstract

A Victorian taxidermy display case presented conservation challenges and decisions that included ethical and methodological considerations regarding the treatment required.

The case was donated to Auckland Museum in 2006 by the Howick Historical Society and contains assorted birds from North and South America. With limited records received from the Howick Society, there was no further information regarding its provenance or history of conservation. Therefore consultation was maintained with the Curator of Applied Arts and Design throughout the process.

Firstly, the case contained numerous birds of different species mounted to a tree-like structure, constructed from wire wrapped in natural fibre and foliage. It was completely sealed with access only possible by removing the back panel, and it was not known if any of the components were attached to this. Secondly, the birds were in very poor condition; some had fallen off their branches, many had damaged feathers, and few had either a loose head or missing tail. Lastly, there was also evidence of pest infestation in both the case and its contents, so investigation was required to determine if this was active.

This poster will address the three main concerns covering the approaches to techniques in the remedial treatment of taxidermy birds, the preventive conservation treatments chosen

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to tackle the pest infestation and how conservation can aid research in determining provenance.

Keywords

Birds, taxidermy, conservation, display case, repair, provenance

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